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SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR SCHIEFFER MEETS WITH JAPANESE DIET
COMMITTEE ON ABDUCTIONS

Classified By: Ambassador J. Thomas Schieffer. Reasons 1.4 (b/d).

¶1. (C) Summary. During a June 22 private, no-press meeting with the Upper House Special Committee on North Korean Abduction Issues, Ambassador Schieffer:

-- recounted his visit to Niigata and the President's personal interest in the abductee issue,

--updated the Committee on North Korea's missile launch preparations,

--cautioned the committee from viewing our actions against Banco Delta Asia as "sanctions," and

-- recognized the growing level of frustration in Japan on the abduction issue, but urged the Committee to never give up hope that justice will be done. End Summary.

¶2. (C) Ambassador Schieffer met with the Upper House Special Committee on North Korean Abduction Issues on June 22, 2006. Committee Chairman Tadashi Hirono began the meeting by thanking the Ambassador for his efforts on behalf of the abductees and their families. The Japanese people have great trust in the Ambassador, Hirono explained, and are very grateful for his visit to Niigata and for helping facilitate the meeting between Sakie Yokota, the mother of a Japanese girl abducted by North Korea, and the President. Hirono also underscored that the meeting was an informal discussion and directed the members not to quote the Ambassador to the press.

¶3. (C) The Ambassador thanked the Committee and stated that the abduction issue is "as important an issue as we can face on human rights." His visit to Niigata helped him realize the enormity of the problem and the number of lives impacted by the abductions. The President, too, has taken a deep personal interest in the issue and has said that his meeting with Mrs. Yokota was one of his most moving experiences. Everyone has to band together, not just the United States and Japan, but all nations that believe in the rule of law, to rectify the situation. The Foreign Ministry's decision to raise the issue at the upcoming G8 summit, and its effort to bring together various embassies in Tokyo to discuss the issue is very encouraging. The overwhelmingly positive international response is helping to build momentum and the Ambassador welcomed ideas on how the United States could help.

Missile Preparation

¶4. (C) Hirono opened the meeting to discussion and asked for

an update on North Korea's missile preparations. If North Korea launches a missile, the Japanese government would take tough measures, in coordination with the United States, he noted. The Ambassador stressed that we remain uncertain about whether the missile is fueled and ready to launch, but acknowledged the possibility that North Korea will launch an ICBM. We have made our concerns public in hopes of deterring North Korea. It would be a provocative act that would violate many agreements, including Prime Minister Koizumi's Pyongyang Declaration and the spirit of the Six-Party Talks (6PT). The United States continues to monitor the situation and is in close communication with the Japanese government, the Ambassador assured the Committee. He applauded the unprecedented level of intelligence cooperation and expressed hope that a united front could dissuade North Korea.

15. (C) Hisashi Kazama of Komeito warned that the Taepodong could be targeting the United States, and we should keep a close eye on Memphis, where the President and Koizumi will hold their summit. Japan Communist Party member Yasuo Ogata expressed hope that the Taepodong issue could be resolved peacefully. If North Korea launches the Taepodong, it will have no more cards to play, Ogata noted. Regarding economic sanctions, we need to be careful not to hurt innocent people and we should build a united front that includes China and South Korea. Unfortunately, the Ambassador responded, North Korea has sometimes benefited from bad behavior. The Bush Administration has made it clear that North Korea should not get any help if it continues to use threat and coercion.

Carrots and Sticks

16. (C) Hirono raised Banco Delta Asia (BDA) and commented that the United States policy toward North Korea appears more weighted toward pressure than dialogue. The Ambassador

cautioned the Committee from viewing our actions against BDA as "sanctions" and drew a distinction between rooting out illegal, criminal activity and sanctions. Any country would react as we have if its currency were being counterfeited and drugs being trafficked. BDA is not a political issue; no sum of counterfeit money or amount of drugs is acceptable. Kazama expressed skepticism that North Korea will halt development of its weapons. The Ambassador countered that North Korea need look no further than Japan to realize that a nation does not need a nuclear weapon to be prosperous. The United States has offered a security guarantee. He pointed to Libya as a perfect example of a country that calculated that a nuclear weapon ran counter to its interests. Giving up its nuclear ambition would give North Korea greater trade opportunities and a chance to reenter the international community.

Human Rights and Refugees

17. (C) Japan recently passed a North Korea Human Rights bill very similar to the U.S. Act, Hirono said. Although the issue would require international collaboration, he wondered if the U.S. Act has had any tangible impact on North Korea. We cannot hope to speak for millions if we lack the authority to speak for one when a great injustice has been done, the Ambassador replied. We must continue to fight for redress together, in the court of public opinion.

18. (C) Despite having the Human Rights Bill and an amendment to the Foreign Exchange Law that could ban North Korean vessels from entering Japanese ports, Kazama thought Japan needed to do more. It has been two years since the United States enacted its law and Kazama wondered if we could identify tangible results. The Ambassador urged him to think in terms of what conditions may be like if the bill had not passed. We need to establish international standards. If a country adheres to the standards, it benefits, if not, it will be penalized. Sanctions are not the first tool we turn to, but we have to contemplate it as an option.

Role of South Korea and China

¶9. (C) Suematsu asked for the Ambassador's views on probable Russian, Chinese and South Korean reactions to a missile launch. The Ambassador expressed hope that South Korea would join the international community in condemning a missile launch, but said we have to respect everyone's decision-making process. Russia, China and South Korea do not want North Korea to have nuclear weapons, but how they convey their feelings to the North is up to them. At the end of the day, North Korea will decide for itself whether or not to launch the missile; credit or fault will lie only with North Korea. All we can do is lay out clearly the consequences of bad actions. If it launches the missile, we will have to take action.

More Communication with North Korean People Needed

¶10. (C) Asao asked about ways to increase information flow between the North Korean public and the outside world. Yamane added that information exchange and radio broadcasts between South and North Korea were recently suspended and he encouraged us to find ways to revive the communication. The regime's attempts to censor outside information underscore the importance of information flow to North Korean people, the Ambassador replied. We should make efforts to improve communication with the North Korean people. It gives those in pursuit of freedom hope and support.

¶11. (U) Participants:

Ambassador Schieffer,
Michael Meserve, Political Minister-Counselor
Tandy Matsuda, Political Officer (notetaker)
Shinobu Kikuchi, Political Assistant (notetaker)

Tadashi Hirono, DPJ, Committee Chairman
Shuntaro Kageyama, LDP, Committee Director
Shinsuke Suematsu, LDP, Committee Director
Toshio Ogawa, DPJ, Committee Director
Ryuji Yamane, DPJ, Committee Director
Naoki Okada, LDP
Koichi Kishi, LDP
Keiichiro Asao, DPJ
Yuko Mori, DPJ

Mitsuyoshi Yanagisawa, DPJ
Hisasahi Kazama, Komeito
Yasuo Ogata, JCP
SCHIEFFER